

The reasonableness of believers dying, and the greater advantage they will have by Jesus Christ, as the resurrection and the life, than if they were not to die; with the importance of believing this.

127. CONSIDER'D in a
S E R M O N

On JOHN xi. 25, 26.

Occasioned by the DEATH of the late

Rev^d. Mr. *John Asty*,

January 20, 17²²₃₀. ætat. 57.

Preached *February the 8th*, to the Church in *Ropemakers-Alley*, of which he was Pastor, in answer to his and their desire, and published at their request; with an enlargement of what relates to his life and character.

To which is added,

A POSTSCRIPT relating to the Reverend Mr. *Samuel Chandler's* second letter to the author about *Preaching Christ*, &c.

By *JOHN GURSE*.

London, Printed for *Richard Hest*, at the Bible and Crown in the Poultry, and *John Oswald*, at the Rose and Crown in Little-Britain. 1730. (Price 6 d.)

the most perfect of beings, and the
most perfect of beings, they will have by the
Christ, in the resurrection and the life, and
if they were not to die, and the resurrection
of the dead.

THE

CONSTITUTION

SERMON

On JOHN 11. 25. 26.

By

Rev. Mr. John A. ...

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John xi. 25, 26.

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, tho he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?

THE frequent return of mournful solemnities of this nature, among the churches in and about this great city, for a few years past, is apt to fill a considerate and serious mind with affecting apprehensions, as if evil days were coming on the earth, and God were apace withdrawing his guidance and defense, and the glory were departing from us. It may justly occasion pathetick exclamations, something like that of *Joash*, when *Elisha* was sick unto death; and he wept over his ^{2 Kings} face, and said, O my father, my father, the ^{13. 14.} chariots of Israel, and the horse-men thereof!

Our fathers where are they? and the pro-^{zec. 1. 5.}phets do they live for ever? We are all of one mortal make; ministers are as frail and

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dying

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dying men as their hearers. But when God houses his faithful servants so fast, it is a sad omen to our world. He seems to be tearing us in his wrath, while he thus breaks us with breach upon breach. This day looks back with a sorrowful aspect upon one, and may bring to remembrance many others, that lately were burning and shining lights in the church below, and are now seen, and shall be heard among us, no more. But

Zec. I. 6. *God's words and his statutes, which he commanded them to deliver in his name, still speak to us, and will take hold of us, in a way of judgment or of mercy, according as they belong to us respectively. Their messages from the Lord still live after they are dead: And as for themselves, tho they are no longer in our world, their spirits live with Christ in a better; and tho their bodies are now mouldering in the dust, they shall be quickened again to a glorious immortality. We may be well assured of this from our text, where, on occasion of the death of one whom Jesus loved, he said of himself, I am the resurrection, and the life, &c.*

These words are our Lord and Saviour's answer to *Martha's* profession of faith about the general resurrection of the dead at the last day. *Jesus* had said unto her, *thy brother*, meaning *Lazarus* who was lately dead, *shall rise again*, ver. 23. She; it seems, understanding him to speak of the general resurrection, says unto him, *I know that he shall*

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shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day, ver. 24. This was an antient article of the church's faith, and was most generally received and acknowledged as such, tho' opposed and denied by the sect of the Sadduces, the scepticks of that age. The apostle *Paul* ranked it amongst the doctrines written in the law and the prophets; and, speaking of the body of the Jews, averred, that *they themselves allowed that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust*. There are several intimations of this in the old testament; and it is reckoned among the principles of the doctrine of *Christ* in the new.

Acts 2. 3.

Chap. 24.
14, 15.

Heb. 6.
1, 2

Martha went into this common faith; but did not think this a direct and immediate relief, as to her present loss; nor did she understand the peculiar concern *Christ* had, as a principal agent, or proper efficient cause in raising the dead: Her thoughts stuck in general conceptions, that God by his infinite power would one day do it, and that *Christ* had such an interest with God, that if he would ask an immediate return of her brother to life again, God would give it him, ver. 22. And therefore to lead her on to what was further designed for her present comfort, and to direct and improve her faith in himself for her own eternal salvation; *Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life, &c.*

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In these words we have,

I. Christ's character of himself. *I am the resurrection, and the life.*

The benignity and the grandeur of this character, together with his gracious and sovereign way of asserting it, proclaim the Saviour and the God. What can be more majestick and divine, beneficent and endearing, than this declaration concerning himself, *I am the resurrection, and the life?* His capacity of being so, must be divine; and his acting according to it, must be founded on his mediation. None but a God could be the resurrection and the life; and none but an atoning Saviour could make it meet that a righteous God should be so to guilty mortals. Our Lord himself died and rose again, that he might be the resurrection and the life to others; and he is not barely an instrument herein, as *Martha* apprehended, but he is the efficient cause, working by his own power to produce that great effect. *The dead shall hear his voice and live.*

John 5.
25.

They shall be raised, and immortalized by an infinite power inherent in himself, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Phil. 3.21.

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He is the principal or head of the resurrection, *the beginning* ἀρχή, and *the first-born*, Col. 1. 18. πρωτότοκος from the dead, who rose by his own power, and will raise us after his own example. He is the fountain of life; In John 1. 4. *him was life, and the life was the light of men* in the order of nature; and *he has life in himself* in the order of grace; and *as the* Chap. 5. *Father raiseth up the dead, and quickneth* 21, 26. *them, even so the Son quickneth whom he will.* Hence he is called by way of eminence, *the life*, in our text, and in other places. See John 14. 6. and 1 John 1. 2. And he^{1 John 5. 20.} is styled *the true God, and eternal life.* He is the author of the resurrection of all mankind; *For the hour is coming, in which all* John 5. *that are in the graves shall bear his voice,* 28, 29. *and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.* He is the resurrection to all; but the life, only to some. The state of the wicked; after their resurrection, is usually in scripture called death, and never life: This name belongs only to the blessed; and the resurrection of damnation, is here opposed to the resurrection of life. The last of these is principally intended in our text. Our blessed Saviour is the resurrection in order to life, and he is the life for eternity after it. We have,

II. His

II. His explication of this character, with a reference to those who shall share in the benefit of it. *He that believeth in me, tho he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me shall never die.* q. d. "Tho the believer must die like other men, and supposing he were dead, as *Lazarus* is, yet shall he live again, if not in this world, yet in a better; and whoever now lives in this world, and while he does so believeth in me, shall never die as other men do, or so as not to rise unto life again: Or, as it might be better rendred, shall not die for ever; ἡ μὴ ἀποθάνει εἰς τὴν αἰῶνα."

Christ will be *the resurrection* to his body, and *the life* to his soul and body too, that his whole person may live in the regions of light, and love, and joy for ever. The second death shall never have any power over him, he shall not die eternally. We have,

III. His question to *Martha*, with relation to what he had said, *believest thou this?* q. d. "Believest thou not only that there shall be a resurrection at the last day; but believest thou this concerning me, that I am the quickner of the dead, and the author of eternal life? and believest thou this concerning all who believe in me, that they shall rise to eternal blessedness? If thou hast this faith, it will compose thy troubled spirit under all its present distress, and open springs of joy amidst thy present sorrows; it will satisfy thee that thy brother, whom

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whom I love, is among thoſe that ſhall be happy for ever ; and that, if I pleaſe, I can even reſtore him to thee again, by raiſing him now from the dead ; and it will give thee comfortable proſpects of thy being for ever happy with him."

In further diſcourſing on theſe words, I ſhall, by divine aſſiſtance, briefly proceed upon three propoſitions, cloſing each of them with practical reflections.

The firſt I ſhall begin with is this,

Prop. I. That believers themſelves are not exempted from dying.

A reſurrection ſuppoſes a preceding death ; and our bleſſed Lord ſpeaks of believers living, tho they were dead. *'Tis appointed to men once* Heb. 9. *to die, and after this the judgment.* The grave^{27.} *is the houſe appointed for all living.* And^{Job 30. 23.} *the living know, but alas ! how little do they conſider, that they ſhall dye.* There is no^{Eccl. 9. 5. Chap. 8.} *man that hath power over the ſpirit, to retain the ſpirit ; neither hath he power in the day of death : and there is no diſcharge in that war, neither ſhall wickedneſs deliver thoſe that are given to it.* And tho righteousneſs delivereth from a judicial^{Prov. 10.} *death ; yet it don't abſolutely deliver from dy-*^{2.} *ing : For, in this ſenſe, the righteous periſheth,* If. 57. 1. *and no man layeth it to heart ; and merciful men are taken away, none conſidering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.* High and low, young and old, male and female, wife

wise men and fools, the healthy and the infirm, saints and sinners, magistrates, ministers, and other people, all must die. 'Tis a standing law or ordinance of God upon the entrance of sin; and, except *Enoch* and *Elias*, that have been translated, and those that shall be alive upon earth at Christ's second appearance; who, as the apostle says, *shall be changed at the last trump*, we have no room to imagine, that any ever were or shall be exempted from it. How, or in what manner those believers shall be changed, that shall be alive on earth at the consummation of all things, we cannot say; but, for what we know, there may be something in it as painful and surprizing as in dying, since the change will be upon mortal bodies, and that change will be as great upon them, as the resurrection will make upon the bodies of those that *sleep in Jesus*.

1 Cor. 15.
51, 52.

1 Thes.
4. 17.

Christ, if he pleased, could as easily have secured all his people from dying, and taken them up immediately in their several generations, soul and body, from earth to heaven, as exempt some, and raise the bodies of others from the grave.

Rom. 8. Tho their *bodies*, as well as others, *are dead*, or become mortal, *because of sin*; yet he that has taken away the sting of death from them, could have taken away its stroke too: There is merit enough in his blood and righteousness for both, if infinite wisdom had seen fit so to order it, as appears from the instances that have been, and shall be of that sort. And yet, in

Rom. 8.
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in the uſual ſtated courſe of things, thro' all ages till the laſt day, the general law of mortality takes place on them, as well as others.

In bringing the many ſons to glory, there is a beautiful conformity of the members of Chriſt's myſtical body to himſelf, their head. They, in the ordinary courſe of things, die and riſe again, after his example : And they that ſhall be *caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*, at his ſecond coming, will be conformed to him in his own aſcenſion, who, whiſt he was converſing with his diſciples on earth, was *taken up from them, and a cloud received him out of their ſight*.

But it was not fit that the law of mortality ſhould be reverſed with reſpect to the generality of believers : For if they, in their ſeveral generations, were to be tranſlated, and unbelievers were to die, a conformity to Chriſt in his death and reſurrection, would utterly fail from among them ; the wicked only would riſe again ; and the reſurrection at the laſt day would be all horror without any mixture of awful joy ; its agreeable ſolemnity, and the glory of the great Redeemer in ſwallowing up death in victory, and calling the inhabitants of the duſty regions into immortality and life, would be loſt ; the natural courſe of things in our preſent ſtate of frailty and dangers muſt be ſtop'd, or inverted, as to
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them that should be translated; and a constant series of unnecessary miracles in their translation must be brought upon the stage; the belief of a future state would be in a manner forced upon the world; and yet, some arguments for a general judgment would be weakened, and that judgment itself would be daily anticipated, by an obvious determination of every one's state before-hand, in the view of all that knew them; and such a visible and important difference, made in our world, might have very unhappy effects upon it.

It might strike too forcibly upon us in this imperfect state, where sensible objects are so apt to impress and govern us. The expectants of a translation would be apt to give way to an impatience of continuing here, under all the troubles of their present warfare, to neglect the necessary means of their preservation, to tempt providence, and unwarrantably throw themselves into the mouth of dangers, and to abate in their natural affections to their nearest relations in life, and in their tender sympathy with their dying friends. And it is probable that, while these were seen to be translated, others, who should expect to die, would be dispirited, like persons under a sentence for dreadful execution, and be swallowed up with so much fear and sorrow, as to unfit them for the common business and duties of life.

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The tranſlation of one ſort of people, and the death of others, might lay a foundation for pride and envy, reproach and ſcorn, confuſion and every evil work, among the families, ſocieties, and friends left behind them. Some would be apt to boaſt, and over-value themſelves, on the account of their tranſlated friends and relatives ; and others would fall under reproach on account of their dead relations and friends. The whole world would be perpetually filled with diſappointment and ſurprize, to ſee ſome die, and others tranſlated, contrary to all former thoughts and expectations about them. This might ſhock ſome, and ſtumble others ; imbolden ſome in ſins and errors, that any of the tranſlated had fallen into ; and diſcourage others in ſome good ways of God, under a ſplendid profeſſion of which any died ; and it might tempt others to an intire indifference, as to all extremes, that ever had been found amongſt any of the tranſlated. It would be apt to lead us into wrong meaſures of judging about ſome things, by the tranſlation or death of the men that practiſed them, rather than by the word of God ; and of judging about ſome principles and practices by perſons, rather than about perſons by them. It would encourage preſumptuous hopes in ſome, and groundleſs fears in others. It would take off the terrors of death from ſome, that ought to be moſt afraid of it ; and ſubject others to thoſe terrors that ought to be moſt comforted

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forted against it. It would leave us inconsolable under the loss of dead friends, and shake the faith and hope of weak christians, that were converted by the ministry of such, as should afterwards die. For these and such like reasons, we may suppose infinite wisdom has ordered, that believers themselves should not be exempted from dying.

Now for our reflections upon this.

I. What wonder is it that ministers, as well as others, die?

Refect. The reasons for it are the same with respect to them, as with respect to other believers. The most excellent and eminent among them are but earthen vessels, of the same brittle frame, and sinful infirmities with other men; they are under the same law of mortality, and are naturally liable to the same distempers and distempers in life with them: Why then should it be wondered at, that the same sort of diseases and mischiefs, which lead the way to death, and carry off others, reach them, and have the same effect on them? Were they to live here always, their lot would be worse than that of other christians, who die and go to heaven; and were they to be caught up thither, without dying, the world would idolize them: It is therefore an instance of divine wisdom and goodness in the government of the world, that they, as well as others, should die.

2. How

2. *How much more ſhould it be our concern, that we may not be unprepared for death, than that we muſt die?*

The ſtroke of death is unavoidable, but its ſting may be eſcaped by the grace of God thro' a Redeemer: And if thou art intereſted in him, and thereby eſcapeſt its ſting, its ſtroke will do thee more good than harm; all bleſſings, and no curſe ſhall be in it, and the ſecond death, which is worſt of all, ſhall have no power over thee; for *he that over-* Rev. 2.11. *cometh, ſhall not be hurt of the ſecond death.* But if thou art in thy ſins, in an unconverted and unpardoned ſtate, out of Chriſt, and thereby expoſed to death's ſting, nothing can be more dreadful than for thee to die; for all ſuch *ſhall have their part in the lake which* Rev. 2.1. *burneth with fire and brimſtone, which is the* ^{8.} *ſecond death.* Why then ſhouldeſt thou be afraid of bare dying? and why ſhould not thy principal care and concern be exerciſed about a due preparation for that unavoidable thing, that it may not be an execution of the curſe upon thee, and that its eternal conſequences may be inexpressibly joyous, inſtead of turning to thy utter confuſion?

In order to this, let thy concern, endeavour, and prayer be for ſuch things as theſe; viz. that thou may'ſt be found in Chriſt, before thou art found by death; that thou may'ſt be waſhed from thy ſins in his blood, and may'ſt have his righteouſneſs upon thee for juſtification of life thro' faith in him; that thou

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thou may'st be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light by heart-changing, sanctifying grace; that thou may'st have nothing to do in thy last moments, but to die; being before-hand safe in Christ for eternity, and having done the work and duty of thy day, and left nothing undone that was necessary for thee to do, relating to this world or the next, against the dying time; that thou may'st be in temper and inclination fit to die; ready to leave this world, like one that has *fought the good fight, finished thy course, and kept the faith*; and ready to go to Christ, like one that has the strongest breathings of soul after him, and the clearest evidence of thy claims, thro' him, to the *crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give unto thee*; and that thou may'st sleep in *Jesus*, among those whom God will bring with him. Hence we may observe,

Prop. II. *That Christ will be better to believers in a resurrection to eternal life, than if they had never died.*

Tho they were dead, yet shall they live; they shall not die for ever, and shall never die any more. Were they always to live in this imperfect state and world, it would be but a sort of honourable exile from their Father's kingdom, court and presence: And tho such an exile is better than they deserve; yet it don't come up to the dignity of their state of grace, to the great capacities and appetites

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tites for enjoyment, they are formed with, nor to the bounteous design of their Saviour's love and merit. They must die in the ordinary course of things, or pass under a change equivalent to death, if they are alive at Christ's second coming, before they can be perfectly happy, and ennobled with all the honours of their adoption, or before they can reap the full benefits of his redemption: And who would not be willing to die, to come at these?

It is but dying out of our present world into a better; out of a world, where we were born in sin, into a world from which, and for which, we are born again by grace; out of a world of sin and sorrows, into a world of unspotted purity, and unmingled joys; out of a world of darkness, disappointments and fears, into a world of unclouded light, and assured confidence; out of a world of weakness, weariness, sickness and pain, which make this life our burden, and enfeeble all our sallies towards a better, into a world free from all encumbrance of body or mind, and adapted for all enlargement in the best of services and fruitions; out of a world infested with numerous and malicious enemies, visible and invisible, into a world where God and Christ, saints and angels dwell together in perfect friendship; out of a world of discord, jars and tumults, into a world of all harmony, love and peace; out of a world of oppression

oppression and reproach, into a world of liberty and glory; and out of a world, whose best accommodations to make it tolerable, perish in the using, into a world that abides in all its great felicities for ever. In a word, 'tis but dying out of a world of all imperfections, into a world as perfect as we can wish it to be. Death is only a passage to believers from a howling wilderness, to the land of promise; from a vale of tears, to the mount of vision; from a field of battle, to crowns and thrones of glory in their Father's kingdom.

And 'tis but half the man, and that his meaner part, that dies. They that *kill the body, are not able to kill the soul*. When the *dust returns to the earth as it was, the spirit returns to God who gave it*: It don't die with the body, but *departs* from it: And the believer's soul takes an immediate flight to *Christ which is far better*. It is *that day with him in paradise*; no sooner *absent from the body, but present with the Lord*.

Mat. 10. 28.
Eccl. 12. 7.
Phil. 1. 23.
2 Cor. 5. 8.

When the dying time approaches, he supports, and often comforts departing saints, with joyous prospects of the world they are going to, by which they *know that when their earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, they have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. And when death executes its commission upon them, he secures them from it's sting; they don't die under the guilt of sin, or under the curse, or

Chap. 5. 1.

condemn-

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condemning sentence of the law : *The sting* ^{1 Cor. 15.}
of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the ^{56, 57.}
law : But thanks be to God, which giveth us
the Victory, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ. A
 blessing, instead of a curse, is pronounced
 by the spirit of truth on them that die in
 him ; *Blessed are the dead which die in the* ^{Rev. 14.}
Lord. ^{13.}

He will likewise heal the wound and
 breach that death makes upon them ; and
 will recover their mouldering dust from the
 power of the grave, by a glorious resurrect-
 ion : *Then shall this corruptible put on in-* ^{1 Cor. 15.}
corruption, and this mortal put on immorta- ^{53.}
lity. It shall be awakened out of the dust
 of the earth, and rebuilt in beauteous form :
This his vile body shall be fashioned like to Christ's ^{Phil 3. 21.}
glorious body ; that as we have born the image ^{1 Cor. 15.}
of the earthy, we may also bear the image of ^{49.}
the heavenly. And oh the transport ! when
 soul and body, both adorned with celestial
 qualities since their separation, and better
 match'd than ever, shall meet again ; both
 immortal, sprightly and active, and jointly
 capable of the illustrious visions, entertain-
 ments and employments of the heavenly
 state, jointly entitled and adjudged to them,
 and jointly disposed for them, vigorous and
 harmonious in them ! Christ will then make
 them a complete, ample, and eternal amends
 for all the short and dying agonies they felt
 at their former parting, and for their ab-
 sence from each other during their state of

D separa-

1 Theff.
4. 17.

Pf. 16. 11.

separation; for thenceforth they shall be inseparably united, and *be ever with the Lord*. To say this, that they shall be ever with the Lord, is to say all, that is great and good, happy and glorious. Thought can go no further, it can't stretch beyond the blessedness included in this; for *in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore*.

Now what better reflection can we make on this, than what the apostle leads us to, which is,

Reflect.
1 Theff. 4.
18.

Comfort one another with these words.

This includes comforting your selves, O Christians, as well as one another, with them. Comfort your selves and one another against the fears of death, with the hopes of the better things that Christ will do for you who believe, than if you were to be kept from dying out of your present state: Comfort your selves and one another with the thoughts of your dead christian friends, that they have got the start of all the living in our world, and are inexpressibly happier with Christ in glory, than they could be amongst us: And comfort your selves and one another with the thoughts, that tho the church and world below suffer great loss, by the greater gain of those, that were useful instruments of God's glory, and of their generation's good; yet that he, who is the resurrection and the life to them in heaven, can

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can as easily be the resurrection and the life of his withering, dying cause on earth. He can quicken dead souls with a divine life to fill up their vacancies here, and can raise up other instruments to do the work that they were engaged in. This brings us to the third proposition.

Prop. III. *That it is of great importance to us to believe these things.*

Our Lord intimates this in his question to *Martha, Believest thou this?* The doctrine of man's mortality can hardly be disbelieved by any of us; daily instances of it all around us will not suffer us to deny it. But yet, alas! how little is it believed, with serious application to ourselves, that we must die! Too many believe it, only as they do things that they have, and desire to have, no concernment in: They assent to it as a truth, but are no more affected with it than if it were all a fable; they believe it at a distance, and put the evil day as far from themselves, as if it would never come, which is next to not believing it at all; and hence they live, as if they never were to die.

But a bare belief of our own mortality, is of less moment, than that of a resurrection by Jesus Christ to eternal life. If we were to die like the brutes, and there were to be an end of us, it would be hardly worth one's while to be much concerned about dying out of such an uncertain, sinful and calamitous

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tous world as this, where disappointments and sorrows, losses and unsocial treatment from without, and our own depraved tempers within, imbitter all its enjoyments. But as we are formed for eternity, and must be inexpressibly and unmixedly happy or miserable in another world for ever, it is of much greater importance to believe that Christ is the resurrection and the life, and that whoever believeth in him shall not die the second death, than that we ourselves must die. All our happiness for eternity is concerned in the faith of this; all the efficacy, advantages, and comforts of christian religion depend upon it; and all its motives are weak and ineffectual without it. If the dead rise not, the faith and hope of christians is vain; they *are of all men most miserable*; and the epicurean reasoning might be countenanced, *let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die.*

1 Cor. 15.
19, 32.

But, as we carry an immortal part about us, and must exist entire men in another world, it is dreadful to be unacquainted with him, who is the resurrection and the life for that world: And it is of the utmost importance for us to believe, that he is so; and above all, to believe this with a reference and application to ourselves, *i. e.* to believe in him, that he may be the resurrection and the life to us, and to realize him by faith, as such, to our own souls; to apply to him, to trust and depend upon him, to commit and yield up ourselves to him, and to act in
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all things towards him, under the influence of this faith, as those that *look for his mercy to eternal life.*

Without something of this faith, all that we hear and believe of these things for others, will only aggravate our guilt and ruin; but this will make us happy in life and death, and for ever ! Oh how unspeakable is the felicity, to be able to say, upon good grounds, with the apostle, to say it by a faith unfeigned, which has an effectual influence to raise our hope, love and obedience ; *I know whom*^{2 Tim. 1.}
I have believed, and am persuaded, that he is^{12:}
able to keep that, which I have committed
unto him against that day. And with *Job*, *I*^{Job 19.}
know that my redeemer liveth, and that he^{25-27.}
shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.
And tho after my skin, worms destroy this
body, yet in my flesh shall I see God : Whom
I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall
behold, and not another ; tho my reins be
consumed within me !

Now to carry on a few reflections upon ^{Reflect.}
all this : Let every one think he hears *Christ*
saying to him, as he did to *Martha* in our
text, *Believest thou this ?*

He demands thy faith, he enquires after it, and expects thy answer : He puts the question to thee now by the ministry of his word, and, I hope, by some secret suggestions of his spirit attending it : He has authority to put it to thy conscience ; and if thou
wilt

wilt not seriously consider it, and return an answer now, he will have thine answer another day. Well then, think solemnly with thyself, what thy answer is or shall be. If thou believest nothing of what thou hast heard from his word, what signifies thy hearing it? What do'st thou think will become of thee for ever, if thou art an infidel with respect to his being the resurrection and the life to them that believe in him? Or, if thou hast no faith in him for thine own salvation, and do'st not believe this concerning him, with a reference to thine own case? Art thou so mean spirited as to be willing to die like the brute? If thou art, yet wilt thou not be justly disappointed and condemned to everlasting woe, for refusing Christ's testimony relating to eternal life, and the evidence and authority that confirm it, by his own resurrection from the dead? Or can'st thou have life and blessedness in any other way, than by him? or rather, must thou not be for ever miserable without remedy?

But I hope better things concerning you, and that there are many among you, that can give such an answer to a question of this sort, as shall lead to more agreeable reflections. Let me suppose this, and assist those reflections upon the three following enquiries.

1. *Believest thou that Christ is the resurrection and the life; and that whoever believes in him, shall never die the second death?*

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O think with thyſelf, what a noble article of my faith is this, beyond all that ever dawned in the light of nature, or in the philoſophy of the heathens! What a glorious Head and Redeemer has the chriſtian Church, who has brought life and immortality to light by the goſpel, and will raiſe his members up to eternal life! What divine and gracious characters mingle in his lovely name! How is he to be revered and adored, for his greatneſs and goodneſs, truſted in as the object of our faith, feared and loved as awfully amiable, and ſubmitted to and ſerved as the Lord of univerſal ſubjection and obedience! How much better is an intereſt in him, than all this world! How concerned ſhould every one be that he may believe in him to life everlaſting; that he may be quickened by his ſpirit to a life of grace here, in order to a reſurrection to an immortal life of glory hereafter! And how ſhould all that profeſs this faith, love as brethren while they are here, and be comforted with the thoughts of living together with Chriſt, as the children of the reſurrection, in a world of perfect harmony and peace above!

2: Believeſt thou in Chriſt for thyſelf, that he may be the reſurrection and the life to thee?

O happy ſoul that do'ſt this, with the faith of the operation of God! Thou art ſafe for eternity,

eternity, and shalt be for ever blessed with him. How thankful should'st thou be for that rich grace thro' him, which has made thee alive to God in this World, and given thee the best hopes of a resurrection to eternal Life in the next ! How should'st thou confide in him with relation to all that concerns his cause and interest, and thy own salvation ! How humble, watchful, and diligent should'st thou be, in all manner of holy conversation and godliness ! How resolute, unwearied, and couragious in his strength, for him and his service ! How patient amidst the various disappointments, and afflictive scenes of this present life ! How contented and yielding to God in all that he orders concerning thee ! How weaned from this World, and raised in thy thoughts and affections, in thy views and motives, and in thy estimate of happiness, above all its little low affairs ! How spiritual and heavenly minded ! How reconciled to death and rejoycing in hope of the glory of God ! How earnest in thy desires after it ; and how careful to walk with him, and war against all sin at such a rate, as by his grace may every day brighten thy evidences for heaven, and improve thy meetness to enjoy it ! Let me add one question further, to those of you, more particularly, that belong to this church. And it is this ?

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3. *Believest thou that the late dear and reverend pastor of this church of Christ lives with him, and shall have a resurrection to eternal life?*

I make no doubt but this is a prevailing belief amongst you all; nor do I know how any, that were intimately acquainted with him, can judge otherwise concerning him. I have seen his own account, as he himself calls it; of his hope concerning the state of his soul, which carries plain signatures of an effectual work of God's grace upon him: And in hopes it may be blessed to your instruction, and to the encouragement of your faith and holy imitation, I shall give you a short view of several things contained in it, as near as may be in his own words.

He introduces his account with thankfully acknowledging the privilege of his descent from godly parents, who were in covenant with God: And goes on to speak abundantly of the advantages he received from a religious education, of his early serious impressions, and repeated convictions of sin, and dreadful apprehensions of divine wrath; till at length God wrought in him a more clear and abiding sense of his own guilt and vileness, of the corrupt fountain of evil in his heart, of inward, spiritual sins, and of the danger of his natural state, which he looked upon as an accursed state under the law. He then was grieved at
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heart for sin, saw the exceeding sinfulness of it, was filled with self-loathings, and self-humblings, and could not rest under it

Amidst these strong convictions, and agitations of his soul, he earnestly longed for an interest in Christ, as seeing there was no other way of peace, but by his blood and righteousness. He endeavoured to believe, but found it hard work, and under a sense of his own inability for it, was stirred up in earnest prayer to beg faith, and all grace at the hand of God, and experienced his drawings. He was brought to resolve to rely on Christ, tho he could not tell whether his faith were right or no, and to wait to see how God would deal with him, thinking in himself, it may be he will be gracious to me. Whatever the event might be, he saw himself under a positive command to believe in Christ, and that this was the only way for his salvation; and his heart was very glad that there was such a way: He was encouraged to take this way for himself, from the ground and warrant that the gracious invitations and free promises of the gospel gave him, from the ability of Christ to save, from his gracious offers, from the kindness and compassions that are in his heart towards sinners, from his readiness to save them, from the many instances there have been of his saving grace, and from what he had already done for him, in giving him the dispositions of those that are more peculiarly invited to come to him.

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He often mentions the great conflicts there were between his will and sin, his hopes and fears, and what comfort and victory were their issues, when God revealed Christ to him. He took refuge in the fulness of that redemption which is in Christ, and in God's design to glorify the riches of his grace in him; and depended on him for sanctification, as well as for righteousness to justification, being equally concerned for both, convinced of the necessity and beauty of holiness, and desirous to glorify God in new obedience.

Sometimes he records his concern and fear, lest he should take up with a partial change, or rest in formality and hypocrisy, and should not be found sincere, with his attending resolutions against all sin, his bitter bewailings of its indwellings, his cleaving to God with full purpose of heart, and labouring to walk in all holy obedience to him. And at other times he expresses his godly jealousy, lest a slavish fear of hell and judgment, were the only spring of his religion. And this he apprehended could not be cleared up, to prove his sincerity, but by the Spirit of adoption, drawing forth his heart into a more filial fear and love of God, which he sometimes found sensibly working within him, and wanted to abound yet more and more.

When at any time he perceived himself to have fallen into sin, his heart worked in a way of deep repentance, humiliation, and

shaming himself before God for it, in renewed acts of faith in the blood of Christ, and in great watchfulness afterwards against it. In that way he was favour'd with the kind, returning intimations of God's love and grace, thro' Jesus Christ, to his humbled and afflicted spirit: And then his soul was dissolved in sorrow and shame, for his ungrateful offences against God, especially under a consideration of the freeness of his love, and of his dispensations of grace like himself, all great and glorious.

He sometimes lamented the deadness and hardness of his own heart, and the sad hours of darkness, in which he was tempted to call into question all the work of the holy spirit in him, but still continued waiting upon God. And at other times he was ready to despair under a sense of his own vileness and unworthiness, and under terrifying apprehensions of God's justice; tho otherwise he thought he had good reason to hope, that God had chosen and sanctified him, accepted him in Christ, and broke the dominion of sin within him. And he abounded in admiration of the free grace of God, that he should look upon, and have any kind thoughts to, such an ungrateful, unworthy, rebellious creature as himself, and in admiration of the power of divine grace, that had brought him off from the love and practice of sins, which he formerly allowed himself in, and that had
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stirred him up to resolved endeavours to mortify them.

He records a great number of scriptures, suitable to his case, which God made use of, and frequently expresses his deep sense of the influence of his spirit, in the whole of the work that had passed upon him. And there one may read his high esteem of the Lord Jesus, of his satisfaction, merit and righteousness ; his grief sometimes at his withdrawals, and his delight in, and communion with him at others ; his love to God, and to his worship, ordinances and service, counting them most reasonable and excellent ; his persuasion of the infallible truth of God's word, and of the certainty of a future state ; his living under an awful sense of the all-seeing eye of God, and of his going directly to appear before him ; and his longings after heaven, that he might enjoy God more fully, might see the Lord Jesus in his glory, and be for ever free from all sin.

And toward the close of that account, he takes notice that, from his own sense of what a horrible, dark, miserable and dangerous condition unconverted sinners are in, and yet know it not, he found his heart much drawn out in compassion to their souls, and thought he could do any thing, and be at any pains, for their conversion and salvation ; and then adds, blessed be God, I hope I have also great love
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to the saints, to all the followers of the lamb, the excellent in whom is all my delight.

In this work of grace, and happy turn upon his temper toward the saints, and for the salvation of others souls, the best foundation was laid for a faithful discharge of the ministry he received of the Lord Jesus: And his good natural parts, and considerable attainments in human literature, and spiritual gifts, together with these, were a rich furniture for his ministerial province, and made

² Tim. 2. ^{15.} him a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. He was willing to spend, and be spent in the service of Christ and of souls. You, of this church, are his witnesses that God was with him; and, I trust, many of you are

¹ Thes. 2. ^{19.} the seals of his ministry, and will be his joy, and crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.

It has been with great pleasure, and, I hope, advantage, that God favoured me with some opportunities of attending upon his publick ministrations: And, as far as I could observe, and was able to judge, they were very serious and evangelical, experimental, solid, and judicious. They principally turned upon the most useful and important points of faith and practice; and were well adapted, by the blessing of God, to inform the judgment, to come close to the conscience, to warm the heart, and regulate the life; The great Doctor Owen was his favourite author,

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thor, and one might easily perceive, that he had drank very much into his sentiments and spirit. He had a fervent zeal for the glory of Christ, together with that of the Father and Holy Spirit, and for every doctrine, that he apprehended to be according to godliness. In that zeal he could not but, as occasions offered, contend earnestly for the faith, which he had built his own hopes of salvation upon, and which he believed was once delivered to the saints: And yet, in my freest converses with him, I have with pleasure observed a remarkable tenderness in his spirit, as to judging the states of those that differed from him, even in points, which he took to be of very great importance. His conversation had an agreeable mixture of the pleasant and the serious; and you, of this church, *were witnesses, and God also,* ^{1 Theff. 2. 10-12.} *how holily, and justly, and unblameably, abating human infirmities, he behaved himself among you that believe; as you know how he exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.*

And by what I have learned from among yourselves, who had the best opportunities of knowing him thoroughly, I persuade myself you cannot soon forget, and must jointly bless his memory when you recollect, with what prudence, gravity, and sweetness of spirit, he walked before you, and presided

ded over you in the Lord ; how meek and humble he was among you ; how earnest in his prayers, and how cautious in his admonitions ; and yet, with what authority he would sometimes rebuke in the name of the Lord Jesus ; how apt he was to disallow of, and acknowledge any mistakes in himself, as well as others, if at any time, thro' a quickness of temper or inadvertency, common to the present frailty of human nature, he had slipt into them ; yea, how disposed to cast a mantle over the failings of others, that were grievous to him, and to ask pardon for his own ; how familiar and condescending he was to such as were of the lowest degree ; how tender and compassionate, charitable and forbearing in his temper and conduct toward the weak, and how he glorified God on the behalf of them that were strong ; how affectionately desirous he was of you all, making your sorrows and your joys his own ; how feelingly he sympathized with the afflicted ; how greatly he rejoiced in the prosperity of every one, especially when their souls prospered ; and how ready he was to do all that in him lay, for your help and comfort. In a word, you

2 Tim. 3. *fully knew his doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, and patience ; how he behaved himself in the church of God ; how he served the Lord with all humility of mind ; how he kept back nothing that*

2 Tim. 3.
10.

Act. 20.
19, 20,
27.

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that was profitable to you, and did not shun to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

And tho, by the nature of the illness that carried him off, God in his awful sovereignty weakned his capacities of giving such noble dying testimonies to the honour of his name, as otherwise might have been hoped for; yet, by what I observed, and have heard from others, he was not a stranger to divine supports and consolations then; and the grace of God so far shone thro' all the enfeebling influence of distemper, that he behaved with exemplary composure and solemnity of spirit, with great humbleness of mind, and with a calm resignation to the will of God. He was not insensible of the hand of God upon him, or of his own weakness, and want of help from above; and while he found himself incapable of his Master's work, his heart continued in it, and cheerfully waited to see what the Lord would do with him.

Now, after all that you have seen, and the little you have been hearing of him, I dare say your answer will be in the affirmative to the question, *Believe ye that he is gone to Christ, and shall appear with him at last, who is the resurrection and the life?* O! then, let the next thought be, and whither shall I go when I come to die? Shall it be to Christ and him, or to a state of eternal separation from them? Let me be a fol-

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lower

lower of him, so far as he was of Christ, as ever I would hope to follow him to glory.

And why should you, on this melancholy occasion, *sorrow as others that have no hope?* Weep not for him, but for yourselves. Think how much happier he is, than when he was here; and rejoice that he is gone to Christ, and to the Father; that, having done his Lord's work, he is gone to receive his gracious reward; that, having finished his labours with you, he is gone to rest in the bosom of his Saviour; that, having lived as long as the incapacitating circumstances of his case would admit of saying, *for me to live is Christ, he died,* that Christ might be his *gain*; and that from a sleep, that moved all your compassions, grief, and fears in this world, he is fallen asleep in Jesus, among those whom God will bring with him to the glorious world on high. Why then should you not rather weep for yourselves, than for him? Weep that you are still left behind, in an apostate world, to struggle and to press thro' temptations, sin, and sorrows, and death, whilst he is got beyond their reach within the veil; that you have lost the helper of your faith and joy; and that God hath pursued a controversy with you, first, in laying him aside by distemper, and now, in removing him by death.

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It is now your turn for solemn reflections on this awful rebuke, which ought to be awaken'd in all churches, whenever the like comes upon them. Tho I know nothing to charge you with in particular, more than others; yet this is a proper season for every one of you seriously to think, whether you have nothing to charge upon yourselves? and whether there may not be a cause among you, wherefore God should thus sorely contend with you? Let each one therefore turn inwards, and lay his hand upon his heart, and say, what have I done to provoke the Lord to this? And let this season of your tenderness and grief be improved to lament, and seek recovery from, your own unprofitableness, or other sins, under the blessed means of grace you have been favoured with, that may have contributed to it.

In this manner *humble yourselves under this mighty hand of God*, who has promised ^{1 Pet. 5,} 6. to such, that *he will exalt them in due time*. And in the midst of all your mournful reflections, intermix the joys of all the good hope of glory, to which God has begotten, or assisted you by his ministry. And remember that the great shepherd of the sheep still lives, and is able to revive his work, and to raise up another pastor after his own heart, instead of him that now rests from his labours, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding, for the fur-

Eph. 4.
30—32.

therance of your faith and obedience, hope, love, and joy. Be earnest, frequent, and united in your supplications to the great Lord of the harvest for it: Take heed of all divisions, mis-understandings, pride, self-seeking, low and party-views, rash and un-brotherly temper and conduct, that would blast your prayers: And let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you; that ye may not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption.



F I N I S.

E R R A T.

Page 17. Line 17, *dele* his.



P O S T S C R I P T.

*Relating to the Rev. Mr. Samuel
Chandler's Second Letter to the
Author about Preaching Christ, &c.*

HA D not providence put this opportunity into my hands, I believe I should have taken no publick notice of Mr. *Chandler's* second letter to me about *preaching Christ*, &c. But being obliged to publish the foregoing Sermon, which was preparing for the press when that letter came to hand, I take this opportunity to tell the world, that I have perused it, and am well satisfied it carries its own confutation and censure, especially when compared with the sermons referred to, and the former letters that have passed between us. Without this comparison, some may probably be imposed upon to my disadvantage, by his unfair quotations, forced interpretations, and triumphant, positive airs. I therefore only desire
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that they may be read, and compared all together, to do me justice, and to convince every one, who will fairly examin them, that any thing in the world may be replied to, in the way he has taken to answer me.

The intelligent and unprejudiced reader will easily observe, in that comparison, that Mr. *Candler* continues to give a very partial account of my notion of preaching Christ, and of my distinction between the *latitude* and *restrictive-way* of preaching him ; that he has, by just construction, given up, as indefensible, one half of what I have evidently proved from his own words, in a large collection of them, to be his own notion of preaching him ; and that he has now betaken himself to the other half of it, which I allowed was part of his notion about it : He disowns and owns, gives up and catches back again, his *latitude-way* of preaching Christ ; so that one don't know where to have him. But it is plain from the whole, that he dare not stand to his own assertions, and therefore would fain alter the true and original state of the controversy between us, relating to that principal point ; and that he now can't help allowing, that preaching Christ, must be preaching with a reference to him.

The reader will as easily observe, that most of the things in my letter, which pinched him too hard to bear a recital, and could not be replied to with any colour, even by misrepresentation itself, are either slipt over in total silence, or turned off, sometimes singly, and at others in the lump, with a slight, a reproach, or a sneer ; that others are evidently curtailed, and here, and there a scrap is picked out, and set in a wrong light ; that some things are foisted in,
instead

instead of others, as might best shelter a desperate cause, and serve invidious designs; and that his censures and amazement often rise high, because his proofs run low.

He will further observe, that his charge of uncharitableness upon me toward my brethren, is renewed with double rudeness and inveteracy, and with a despicable resolution to add to it a charge of insincerity: And, rather than this should fail, every unworthy art, bearing the image of its own view, is tried to fix it upon me. The most plausible, I think, of all those charges, stands on this ridiculous foot, *viz.* That if in one single expression, I had my eye upon the *Deists*, *Arians*, and *Socinians*, I therein aimed at the support of a private party-cause, and at an invidious reflection on some particular persons and parties, contrary to what I had solemnly disclaimed to take off the offence of my brethren; as if *they* could be supposed to be offended, at my having persons of those characters in my thoughts; and as if a reflection, as he calls it, upon such persons, could be an aim at the support of a private party-cause; and yet he will have it, that the reflection is so difficult to be understood, as intended for them, that my explication of it that way must be charged as insincere.

The reader will likewise observe, how just and generous Mr. *Chandler* is, in not allowing me the natural right of explaining my own sense of my own expressions, which he had forced to the worst constructions, that ill-nature itself could put upon them. And even in instances, where 'tis impossible for him to judge with any certainty, he is so bold as to impute falshood to my explications, as freely, as if he knew my heart: And yet, as the design of those explications was to shew, that I did not intend a charge so severe, as he said I had made upon my brethren, one would have thought
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he should willingly have admitted explications in their favour, if the support of their reputation, and not the blasting of mine, was indeed the thing he was concerned for. But whether Mr. *Candler*, or others of his honour and justice, if there be any such, will believe me or no, I am fully at rest in my self, having no consciousness of falshood to reproach me. *'Tis a very small thing with me, that I should be judged of him, or of man's judgment;--he that judgeth me is the Lord.* And my highest ambition is to be approved of him, *who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of our hearts.*

1[Cor. 4.
3, 4, 5.

His complaints, that *I paint him out as a prophan, impious, and abandoned sinner*, and the like, are set out in his own words, and not in mine, and in much stronger terms, than, as far as I find, any that I had used. They are often formed in such a manner, that, without consulting my letter, none can tell which are my words, and which his own: And when he recites my words, 'tis without letting one see their connection with his own, which I had either transcribed from, or referr'd to in his letter, as the ground and reason of them. But when the reader sees them in that connection, he can hardly think that I could in justice speak more tenderly, or say less touching things, than I have. Many, who before this controversy were prejudic'd in his favour, have wonder'd that I could spare him so much, or forbear saying more; and all may see that whatever was spoken of, as disagreeable and odious in the spirit of his performance, was only shewing him his own picture, as himself had drawn it.

The original would have bore painting out in much darker colours, than I could persuade myself to use: They naturally offered to my pen, while I was looking upon its strongest features;

tures; but I purposely with-held many strokes of the black complexion, which he had made his own, and gave him a view of no more of them, than seemed absolutely necessary to a just vindication of my own and my brethren's characters, and of the truth itself, from his unparallell'd aspersions; as also, to let him see what a monstrous figure his boasted charity makes, (that he might learn to shape it better) and how little he would like, that his harshest expressions should be returned upon him, if he should winch and scream at some of the softest. In these circumstances, I would ask any impartial judge, What ought I, or what in reason could I have said less of the disagreeable turn than I did? Or how could the few things I said, with as much softness as possible, under this necessity, be counted railing for railing? or be inconsistent with the spirit of the meek and humble Jesus? But I own it is a great unhappiness to have to do with a man, that will not put it into one's power to speak honourably of his way of writing, or to indulge the pleasures of friendship and peace, while we differ in our sentiments.

'T would be very easy, as far as I see, to give a distinct and sufficient answer to his second letter, which is as full of plain inconsistencies as the first, and is more exceptionable, and abusive, in several places, than that. But such answer could not be made, in its just and full strength, without saying much harder things of him, than I can allow myself, under the highest provocations, to go into. I rather chuse to leave both our characters to God and the world, to judge between us, than to enter into a thorough vindication of my own, or accusation of his.

As Mr. *Candler* has egregiously shuffled in the very state of the question about preaching Christ, and 'tis difficult to say what is now his determinate

notion concerning it ; and as he has offer'd nothing material to overthrow mine, 'tis not worth my while to contend any farther about personal things: As the turn of his temper is so disgraceful to the ministerial and christian characters, so exactly matching his own mottoes, so assuming, uncharitable, and ludicrous, (too merry indeed for me ;) and as it is so averse to solemnity, tenderness of conscience, and modesty, in debates about religious matters, that one can't speak a word with any of those aspects, but it must be exposed to ridicule, and be interpreted into hypocrisy, into a cloak for the worst designs, or into a suspicion, at least, upon sincerity and truth, I can't, with any satisfaction, continue an argument with him, tho under all desirable advantages on my side of the question: And as he keeps no measures consistent with decency, or with fair and serious disputation, and is utterly impatient of all opposition and blame, tho ever so just, and managed with as much gentleness, as his own obvious guilt, and the nature of things admit of, I can't but think he has shamefully forfeited his right to a distinct reply. And upon all these considerations, I am determined he shall have none from me.

John Guyse.



